February 29, 2016

The Honorable Sally Jewell Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As the co-chairs of the Atlantic Offshore Energy Caucus, we represent a diverse group of members unified around opening the Atlantic for offshore energy exploration. While the Department of the Interior concludes the planning period for the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program, we wanted to remind you of the continued support that exists for Atlantic lease sale 260 and ask that you retain the full area included in the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) without further limitations.

According to the EIA, Gulf of Mexico production is estimated to increase to record high levels in 2017. This increase in production is a result of the leasing decisions made a decade or more ago. Knowing that oil and natural gas will be needed for many more decades to come, DOI should not prematurely close the door on future leasing and exploration of the Atlantic OCS. Decisions made today matter.

We are joined by our colleagues in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia in supporting future access to the oil and natural gas resources off our states' coasts in the mid- and south-Atlantic. We ask that you take into consideration the support of the many stakeholders in our states including our Congressional delegations, our Governors, state and local leaders and the citizens of our states. We ask that you not close the door on the potential for thousands of new jobs, enhanced national security and much needed new government revenue by removing the Atlantic in the Proposed Plan or further limit the one proposed lease sale included in the Draft Proposed Program.

Members of our caucus have written to the Department regarding their support on several occasions. On April 23, 2015, a diverse group of 163 members from the Senate and House of Representatives wrote expressing our views on the Department's draft proposed plan. This letter highlighted our support for opening new areas for exploration, including the Atlantic OCS.

On March 27, 2015, more than 30 members of the House of Representatives wrote the Department regarding their specific support for Atlantic lease sale 260. Additionally, on August 1, 2014, during the Department's Request for Information comment period for the draft proposed plan, 164 members of Congress wrote to the Department encouraging them to establish a rigorous lease sale schedule in the Gulf of Mexico and open new areas for development. All of these letters, which are enclosed here, were signed by a broad group of members of Congress reflecting different constituencies that recognize the benefit offshore oil and gas exploration would have on our communities and our nation's goal of becoming energy secure.

Clearly, members of the House of Representatives and the Senate have demonstrated their strong support for opening the Atlantic OCS for energy exploration and this support remains today. We continue to urge you to retain the entire proposed Atlantic lease sale 260 area without further restriction, and open these areas for future oil and gas leasing, exploration, and production.

Sincerely,

Richard Hudson Member of Congress

Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Enclosure:

Letter dated April 23, 2015 Letter dated March 27, 2015 Letter dated August 1, 2014

### Congress of the United States

**Clashington**, **DC** 20510 April 23, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell Secretary U.S. Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, NW, Room 7229 Washington, DC 20240-0002

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We are writing to express our views on the recently released Draft Proposed 2017-2022 Five Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Leasing Program (DPP). Specifically, we have concerns over the premature restrictions placed on the proposed lease sale areas in the Atlantic, including the 50-mile buffer zone for the entirety of the Atlantic proposed areas, the permanent withdrawal of areas offshore Alaska and the limited opportunities available under the program as proposed. As this process moves forward, we urge you to retain the entire Atlantic lease sale 260 area without additional restrictions in these planning areas for future oil and natural gas leasing, exploration and production. We also strongly encourage the Administration to make additional areas of the OCS available for leasing and to increase the amount of lease sales from the historic low number proposed in the draft plan.

As Members of Congress committed to a strong, comprehensive domestic energy strategy, we wholeheartedly believe that the United States must not shrink away from developing our nation's offshore energy resources. A robust Five Year OCS Program should be a key component of the Administration's all-of-the-above energy strategy that can continue to advance the job creation, economic growth and energy security gains that the U.S. has enjoyed thanks to the recent boom in energy production on state and private lands. Given that offshore developments have high costs and exceptionally long development timelines, the Five Year program sets the foundation for more than a decade of development. As such, we fear that the currently proposed DPP sets the stage for energy insecurity instead of domestic prosperity.

While we were pleased to see the Administration finally take a step in the right direction by including one potential lease sale in the Atlantic in the draft plan, this step was offset by the additional restrictions in the Atlantic and area withdrawals in the offshore of Alaska. What the administration proposed appears merely to be an effort to provide political cover irrespective of the opportunity foregone. When coupled with the imposed buffer zones, and an insufficient number of lease sales, none of which are required to be held, this draft proposal fails to produce a long-term energy policy that harnesses the potential of our nation's vast natural resources. In this respect it is disingenuous.

During your March 5, 2015 testimony before the House Natural Resources Committee you admitted that you cannot guarantee that the Atlantic would have a single lease sale in the final DPP. Considering that the Department of the Interior (DOI) is not mandated to actually hold any lease sale made available in a DPP, it seems shortsighted and irresponsible to limit at this early stage in the process the proposed lease sales to a number that doesn't even meet President Jimmy Carter's low threshold nearly 40 years ago.

This Administration's insistence on keeping more than 85 percent of our OCS off-limits to domestic energy development has been counterproductive to efforts to boost our nation's economy. Our struggling economy is on the verge of a transformational manufacturing renaissance and is capable of producing the resources needed to make it a reality. The federal budget needs new revenues, and U.S. energy security, which is finally on the brink of breaking OPEC's stranglehold, could be realized if not for these unnecessary bureaucratic barriers. Considering the significant and uncontrollable geopolitical forces that continue to impact our energy security, this Administration can no longer afford to ignore our abundant offshore resources.

There is strong bipartisan support from Members of Congress, governors, state legislators, local leaders and the general public for allowing oil and natural gas development in more areas of the U.S. OCS. States that have not directly seen the economic prosperity that accompanies offshore development are anxious to reap the benefits from the indirect investment in technologies and manufacturing that facilitate such work. We strongly believe that the Department should move forward from the DPP with a 2017-2022 Proposed Program that sets a more aggressive schedule of sales in currently open areas and also allows for the exploration of new areas, such as the Atlantic and the offshore in Alaska. These areas are significant for future resource development, without subjective and potentially damaging area withdrawals, omissions and exclusions. The 2017-2022 OCS Five Year Program must represent a significant departure from the existing moratorium on the vast majority of the U.S. OCS and embrace America's offshore energy program as a serious contributor to the nation's standing as an energy superpower.

Rather than just indulge our engagement in the development stages of the 2017-2022 OCS Five Year Program planning process, we ask that you actually work with Congress on this important proposal. We are at a critical time in developing America's energy policy, and decisions we make today will have an impact on future U.S. oil and natural gas production. Such decisions will also significantly impact our standing in a volatile global economy. It is important that the administration is forward-thinking in America's energy development planning and we are eager to work with the administration to ensure we are headed down the path to prosperity and security through increased offshore American energy production.

Sincerely,

Lisa Murkowski

United States Senator

Tim Scott

United States Senator

Rob Bishop

Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn

Member of Congress

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

United States Senator

Garret Graves

John Barrasso, M.D. United States Senator  James Inhofe United States Senator	Mike Lee United States Senator  John Cornyn United States Senator
Rob Portman United States Senator	Roger Wicker United States Senator
Deb Fischer United States Senator	Cory Gardner United States Senator
Orrin Hatch United States Senator Johnny Isakson	David Perdue United States Senator  Michael Enzi
Thom Tillis United States Senator	United States Senator  Thad Cochran United States Senator
Jeff Sessions United States Senator	James Risch United States Senator
Shelley Mone Capito Shelley Capito United States Senator	Steve Daines United States Senator

John Thune United States Senator

Dan Sullivan United States Senator

Tom Cotton United States Senator David Vitter

United States Senator

Ted Cruz

United States Senator

Richard Burr

United States Senator

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March 27, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, NW Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As Members of Congress who represent Atlantic states, we are encouraged by the Department of the Interior's (DOI) decision to include areas in the Mid and South Atlantic as part of the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program ("Five Year Program"), but we remain disappointed in the draft plan's unnecessary restrictions in the Atlantic that could jeopardize America's long-term energy and economic security. As the planning process moves forward in the development of the Five Year Program, we urge you to retain the entire proposed Atlantic lease sale 260 area without further restricting these areas for future oil and gas leasing, exploration, and production.

A strong all-of-the-above energy strategy for our nation cannot exist without a robust offshore oil and gas leasing program that includes access to America's energy resources in the Atlantic. In the current 2012-2017 Five Year Program, 87 percent of America's OCS remains off-limits to energy leasing, exploration and production. While other countries are actively expanding OCS energy development, it is unacceptable that our nation remains blindfolded with regard to what resources exist offshore and that this Administration continues to unnecessarily restrict access to critical domestic energy resources. The American public, and particularly the overwhelming majority of residents in our states, support the increased development of our nation's OCS resources, and we wish to see a Five Year Program that reflects these important principles. Restricting access within a 50 mile buffer along the entirety of the proposed area, and only including one lease sale in 2021, fails to meet this standard. We urge the Department to reconsider the configuration of the buffer and add more lease sales earlier in the plan, which would more accurately reflect the desires of individual states.

As we have seen in the Gulf of Mexico and in other areas around the world for decades, other ocean industries, as well as tourism and military operations, can all thrive in conjunction with offshore energy exploration and development. In addition, there are numerous existing regulatory systems – at the state, federal, and local levels – that ensure the compatibility of all industries, as well as the conservation of our environment. By relying upon a cooperative process to reach science-based decisions, offshore development is guided by ample public input from state officials, local communities and leaders, and all coastal stakeholders. Furthermore, the energy industry has enhanced spill prevention and containment, as well as proven response capabilities, and the Department's robust regulatory requirements have put in place various new standards that have made offshore drilling safer than ever. As the co-chairs of the national spill commission formed after Macondo said in April 2014, "offshore drilling is safer than it was four years ago."

There is strong bipartisan support in our states from members of Congress, governors, state legislators, local leaders and the general public for allowing oil and natural gas development in the Atlantic. Our states, which have not seen the direct benefits of offshore development, are anxious to reap the many economic benefits and help put America on a path to greater energy security.

Offshore energy production must play a key role as America continues to grow as an energy superpower – creating more good-paying American jobs, providing much-needed federal and local government revenue, and enhancing our nation's energy security. For these many reasons, we urge the Department to move forward with a Five Year Program that includes the entire proposed Atlantic lease sale 260 area without any additional restrictions on access, while thoughtfully reconsidering the proposed 50 mile buffer.

It is also important that the Department work quickly to approve permits for seismic and other geophysical surveys in the Atlantic. These permits have been pending since last July when the Department completed its Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for Geological and Geophysical Activities in the Mid- and South Atlantic OCS. Since the current estimates of the Atlantic's resource potential are out of date and based on surveys conducted over 30 years ago, the information derived from these new surveys will provide an updated and environmentally safe assessment of the oil and natural gas reserves in the Atlantic. As you have indicated in testimony before Congress, the importance of these surveys will enable informed decisions to be made on how to best utilize these resources to ensure our future energy security. Timely consideration and approval of the permits is critical so that companies can plan their operations, conduct the surveys, and process the data into meaningful tools that can be used by decision-makers.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that exploration and production of our natural resources continues to move America to energy security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We await your response.

Sincerely,

Jeff Duncan
Member of Congr

of Congress

Richard Hudson

Member of Congress

Scott Rigell

**Bob Goodlatte** Member of Congress

Pom Price Member of Congress

Jeb Hensarling Member of Congress

Robert Hurt Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Mick Mulvaney

Member of Congress

Tom Graves Member of Congress

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Pete Sessions Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Rick Allen Member of Congress

Austin Scott Member of Congress

Doug Collins

Mark Meadows Member of Congress

Robert Pittenger Member of Congress

Virgina Foxx Member of Congress

Patrick McHenry Member of Congress

Barbara Comstock Member of Congress

Robert Wittman Member of Congress Member of Congress

Wellen Mark Walker Member of Congress

Renee Ellmers Member of Congress

George Holding Member of Congress

Member of Congress

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Louie Gohmert Member of Congress

Paul Gosar

Member of Congress

Glenn Thompson Member of Congress

Steve Pearce

Member of Congress

Pete Olson

Member of Congress

Inthia Lummis Member of Congress

August 1, 2014

The Honorable Sally Jewell Secretary Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As Members of Congress committed to a comprehensive domestic energy strategy, we encourage the Department of the Interior (DOI) to proceed with a new Five Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2017-2022 that establishes a rigorous lease sale schedule in the Gulf of Mexico, but also expands opportunity for development to areas not included in the last plan – such as the vast acreage that was opened in 2008 when both the Presidential and Legislative moratoria on offshore drilling expired. A broad, bipartisan majority in the U.S. House of Representatives and the American public have long supported increased development of our nation's OCS resources. This commitment has been repeatedly demonstrated by passage of legislation that expands access to these new areas, while continuing leasing in existing areas. We wish to see a Five Year Outer Continental Shelf leasing program that reflects these important principles.

The commencement of this program occurs at a critical time in our country's resurgence as an energy superpower. Increasing onshore production on state and private lands is helping to pull our nation out of a recession and driving down our trade deficit. At the state and local level in Pennsylvania, Texas, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota and many others, economic activity related to energy production is creating thousands of jobs and generating increased revenues that are being reinvested in public education, transportation projects, and other municipal improvements. The energy boom on state and private lands stands as a paradigm of our nation's entrepreneurial spirit. There is no reason why we cannot replicate this vigorous job growth in more states by opening new OCS areas for development as was envisioned in 2008 when the moratoria on the OCS was lifted in a bipartisan fashion between the then Democrat Majority House and President Bush.

Since the 1950s, the Gulf of Mexico has been the world's preeminent area for offshore drilling alongside thriving fishing and tourism industries. This is where the technological innovation behind pursuing deepwater resources was born and where it has flourished. Today, over 60 years later, the playing field has significantly changed. Countries like Canada, Mexico and China are ramping up their efforts to develop their offshore resources and directly competing with the United States. Simply put: the status quo will not suffice. By producing more American energy from our OCS resources, we can help to insulate our nation from global price shocks and put the United States and our allies on a more secure path.

As you consider areas to include in the 2017-2022 Draft Proposed Program, we note that the administration and the Department of the Interior have made considerable changes to the structure and regulations that govern offshore energy development to enhance safety. The industry has also stepped up with the development of best practices and technologies focused on the areas of spill

prevention, containment, and recovery. We are confident that these changes will allow offshore exploration and development to proceed in an environmentally responsible way.

For these many reasons, we believe the Department must move forward with a Five Year Program that continues to lease in the Gulf of Mexico but also includes new areas with the greatest resource potential as well as areas such as the Mid- and South-Atlantic, or the Arctic, where there is strong bipartisan support from members of Congress, governors, state legislators, local leaders and the general public for allowing oil and natural gas development. With the formation of the 2017-2022 Five Year Program, this administration will be responsible for a decade of offshore lease planning; a legacy of leasing in existing areas will not put our nation's offshore energy production on sound footing. We cannot afford to pass up this pivotal opportunity to expand safe and responsible OCS energy development.

It is our sincere hope that you will demonstrate a similar commitment to our nation's energy future by crafting a program that increases offshore production in new areas to create more American jobs, provide much-needed federal and local government revenue, and fortify our nation's growing position as an energy leader.

Sincerely,

Jeff Duncar Member of Congress

Scott Rigell

Member of Congress

Doc Hastings

Member of Congress

Rob Bishop

Member of Congress

Bill Flores

Member of Congress

Richard Hudson

Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn

Member of Congress

Bill Cassidy

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Jeb Hensarling Member of Congress  Dave Camp Member of Congress	Steve Scalise Steve Scalise Member of Congress  Ace Barton Joe Barton Member of Congress
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Paul Cook	Brad Wenstrup

Member of Congress

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Jason Smith Member of Congress	Pete Sessions Member of Congress
Bradley Byrne Memberlof Congress  M.C.	Adrian Smith Member of Congress
Louie Gohmert Member of Congress	Lee Terry Member of Congress

## Congress of the United States

Mashington, DC 20515		
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Lynn Westmoreland Member of Congress	Tent Franks Member of Congress
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Mike Coffman Member of Congress	Bob Latta Member of Congress
John Shimkus Member of Congress	Robert Wittman Member of Congress
Charles W. Dent Member of Congress	Tom Cole Member of Congress
Jason Chaffetz Member of Congress	Dana Rohrabacher Member of Congress
Marlin Stutzman Member of Congress	David Joyce Member of Congress

Patrick Meehan	Kerry Bengvolio
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
Lynn Jenkins Member of Congress	Martha Roby Member of Congress
Michael R. Turner Member of Congress  Morgan Griffith Member of Congress	Steve Daines Member of Congress  Mike Simpson Member of Congress
James Sensenbrenner	Fred Upton
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
Luke Messer	Andy Barr
Member of Congress	Member of Congress